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Letter dated 22 April 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the United States of America has decided to present its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2009-2012 at the elections to be held on 12 May 2009 in New York.

In this regard, the Government of the United States of America has the honour to submit herewith a written pledge of its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex). The Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Assembly.

(*Signed*) Susan E. **Rice**

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Annex to the letter dated 22 April 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Human rights commitments and pledges of the United States of America

The deep commitment of the United States to championing the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is driven by the founding values of our nation and the conviction that international peace, security and prosperity are strengthened when human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected. As the United States seeks to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world, we do so cognizant of our own commitment to live up to our ideals at home and to meet our international human rights obligations. We therefore make the following pledges:

Commitment to advancing human rights in the United Nations system

1. The United States commits to continuing its efforts in the United Nations system to be a strong advocate for all people around the world who suffer from abuse and oppression, and to be a stalwart defender of courageous individuals across the globe who work, often at great personal risk, on behalf of the rights of others.

2. The United States commits to working with principled determination for a balanced, credible and effective United Nations Human Rights Council to advance the purpose of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To that same end, in partnership with the international community, we fully intend to promote universality, transparency and objectivity in all of the Council's endeavours. The United States commits to participating fully in the universal periodic review process and looks forward to the review in 2010 of its own record in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the United States.

3. The United States is committed to advancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the General Assembly and the Third Committee, and in this vein intends to actively participate in the 2011 review by the General Assembly of the work of the Human Rights Council.

4. The United States is also committed to the promotion and protection of human rights through regional organizations. Through our membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States, the United States commits to continuing efforts to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to strengthening and developing institutions and mechanisms for their protection. In particular recognition of its human rights commitments within the inter-American system, the United States strongly supports the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

5. The United States recognizes and upholds the vital role of civil society and human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights and commits to promoting the effective involvement of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, and other international organizations.

6. As part of our commitment to the principle of universality of human rights, the United States commits to working with our international partners in the spirit of openness, consultation and respect and reaffirms that expressions of concern about the human rights situation in any country, our own included, are appropriate matters for international discussion.

Commitment to continue providing support to human rights activities in the United Nations system

1. The United States is committed to continuing its support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In 2009, the United States intends to pledge $8 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its efforts to address violations of human rights worldwide, as well as an additional $1.4 million to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, and more than $7 million to other funds.

2. The United States is also committed to continuing its support of other United Nations bodies whose work contributes to the promotion of human rights. In 2008-2009, the United States has contributed funding to support human rights efforts, inter alia, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ($130 million), the United Nations Democracy Fund ($7.9 million) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) ($4.5 million). The United States also supports the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and is contributing $50 million for fiscal year 2009, as provided in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

Commitment to advancing human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human dignity and prosperity internationally

1. The United States commits to continuing to support States in their implementation of human rights obligations, as appropriate, through human rights dialogue, exchange of experts, technical and interregional cooperation, and programmatic support of the work of non-governmental organizations.

2. The United States commits to continuing its efforts to strengthen mechanisms in the international system established to advance the rights, protection and empowerment of women through, for example, supporting the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), on women, peace and security, and all relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly 61/143 and 63/155, on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women; supporting the work of the Commission on the Status of Women; and supporting the work of the Inter-American Commission on Women.

3. The United States commits to continuing to promote respect for workers' rights worldwide, including by working with other Governments and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to adopt and enforce regulations and laws that promote respect for internationally recognized worker rights and by providing funding for technical assistance projects designed to build the capacity of worker organizations, employers and Governments to address labour issues, including forced labour and the worst forms of child labour, such as child soldiering, workplace discrimination, and sweatshop and exploitative working conditions.

4. The United States commits to continuing to advocate a victim-centred and multidisciplinary approach to combating all forms of trafficking in persons and to restoring the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of human trafficking victims.

5. The United States commits to continuing to promote freedom of religion for individuals of all beliefs, particularly members of minority and vulnerable religious groups, through dedicated outreach, advocacy, training and programmatic efforts.

6. The United States is committed to continuing to promote human rights in the fight against HIV/AIDS in a variety of ways, including through promoting the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, fighting against stigma and discrimination, and supporting women's rights. The United States is committed to preventing suffering and saving lives by confronting global health challenges through improving the quality, availability and use of essential health services.

7. The United States is committed to continuing its leadership role in promoting voluntary corporate social responsibility and business and human rights initiatives globally. The United States intends to convene Government, civil society and business stakeholders for the purpose of seeking joint solutions in respect of business and human rights, and to serve as an active participant in key multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.

8. Recognizing the essential contributions of independent media in promoting the fundamental freedom of expression, exposing human rights abuses and promoting accountability and transparency in governance, the United States commits to continuing to champion freedom of expression and to promote media freedom and the protection of journalists worldwide.

9. We are dedicated to combating both overt and subtle forms of racism and discrimination internationally. The United States is party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and is committed to seeing the goals of this covenant fully realized. Particular emphasis should be placed not only on eliminating any remaining legal barriers to equality, but also on confronting the reality of continuing discrimination and inequality within institutions and societies.

Commitment to advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms in the United States

1. The United States executive branch is committed to working with its legislative branch to consider the possible ratification of human rights treaties, including but not limited to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ILO Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation.

2. The United States is committed to meeting its United Nations treaty obligations and participating in a meaningful dialogue with treaty body members.

3. The United States is committed to cooperating with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, as well as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and other regional human rights bodies, by responding to inquiries, engaging in dialogues and hosting visits.

4. The United States is also strongly committed to fighting racism and discrimination, and acts of violence committed because of racial or ethnic hatred. Despite the achievements of the civil rights movement and many years of striving to achieve equal rights for all, racism still exists in our country and we continue to fight it.

5. The United States is committed to continuing to promote human prosperity and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons within the United States, including through enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its amendments, engaging religious and community leaders in upholding religious freedom and pluralism, and encouraging the members of the private sector to serve as good corporate citizens both in the United States and overseas.